

## Libya

{lib'-yuh}

Libya, a petroleum-rich Arab nation located in North Africa, is Africa's fourth largest country. After centuries of rule by Ottoman Turks, three decades as an Italian colonial possession, and post-World War II combined British and French administration, Libya gained independence in 1951 as the United Kingdom of Libya. In 1969, Col. Muammar al-QADDAFI led a military coup that ended the monarchy and proclaimed the Libyan Arab Republic. In 1977 the country's official name was changed to the Popular Socialist Libyan Arab Jamahiriya (the word Jamahiriya meaning "state of the masses"). The Mediterranean Sea lies to the north, Egypt and Sudan to the east, Tunisia and Algeria to the west, and Chad and Niger to the south. Tripoli, on the Mediterranean coast, is the capital.

### LAND AND RESOURCES

Libya consists of three distinct physical regions: the northwest coast, the northeast coast, and a vast desert region to the south that covers more than 90% of the nation. The northwest region, the historical province of Tripolitania, borders the Mediterranean Sea and rises southward in a series of steps from a narrow, often marshy, coastal plain to the 120-km wide (75-mi) Jaffara Plain and the shrub-covered plateau of Jabal Nafusah, with elevations of about 600 to 900 m (2,000 to 3,000 ft). The northeastern region, which is the northern part of the historical province of CYRENAICA, lies east of the Gulf of Sidra on the Mediterranean. The land rises southward from the narrow al Marj plain near the sea to the tree-covered slopes of the Jabal al Akhdar, or Green Mountains, at elevations less than 915 m (3,000 ft). To the south stretch the semiarid and desert lands that are part of the SAHARA. Elevations range from below sea level in the northeast, near the Egyptian border, to 2,286 m (7,500 ft) in Bette Peak, Libya's highest point, located in the rugged Tibesti Massif near the border with Chad. Al-Kufrah, Ghat, and Ghudamis, three of the large oases, are located in depressions where groundwater reaches the surface or where well drilling is feasible.

### Climate

The coastal regions have a Mediterranean climate with moderate temperatures and enough rain during the winter months for grain farming. In Tripoli average temperatures are 30 deg C (86 deg F) in summer and 8 deg C (46 deg F) in winter; annual precipitation averages 380 mm (15 in) and falls mainly in winter. Semiarid conditions predominate in the al Marj and Jaffara plains, and in the southern deserts frequent periods of drought occur. A scorching wind called the ghibli occasionally blows into the usually humid coastal towns.

### Resources

Libya has no perennial rivers and is drained by intermittent water courses called wadis that flow only after heavy rains. Most water is obtained from shallow wells that tap vast underground artesian aquifers (water-bearing rock layers). Only the Jabal al Akhdar, covering about 1% of the country, is forested. Steppe vegetation, including esparto and other short grasses, is characteristic of northern semiarid areas, and xerophytic, or drought-resistant, vegetation predominates in desert areas. Petroleum and natural gas, first discovered in 1959 at Zaltan, are abundant and constitute the principal mineral resources; iron ore and potash deposits are also present.

### PEOPLE

About 90% of Libya's population belong to the Arabic-speaking majority of mixed Arab-Berber ancestry. True BERBERS, who retain the Berber language and customs, are the largest non-Arab minority but form only 4% of the population; they are concentrated in small, isolated villages in the west. Other minorities are the Arabic-speaking Harratin, of Negroid and West African ancestry, who make up about 3% of the population and inhabit the southern oases; and the Berber-related TUAREG and Tebu in the south, who make up about 1% of the population. The official language is Arabic. The Sunni branch of Islam is the official religion and the nation's dominant political, cultural, and legal force.

The Mediterranean coastal areas, where 90% of the population live, are densely populated; other areas are only sparsely settled or uninhabited. TRIPOLI and BENGHAZI are the largest cities. About 20% of the population are nomadic, particularly in the east. Population growth is rapid. Nonetheless, Libya's development programs are hindered by a serious labor shortage. About 30% of the industrial labor force is composed of foreigners. Primary education for children between the ages of 6 and 12 is now compulsory. Libya's petroleum revenues have been used in part to finance construction of schools, hospitals, clinics, and higher-education facilities. The University of Garyounis (1955) in Benghazi and Tripoli's Alfateh University (1973) are among the nation's main higher-education

02041

Figure 1

[illegible]

250700Z MAR 64

1. The first step in the process of identifying a problem is to determine the nature of the problem. This involves a thorough understanding of the situation and the people involved. It is important to gather all relevant information and to consider the perspectives of all stakeholders. This step is crucial for developing an effective solution.

530.000

[illegible]

06-0000001

1. The Commission has received information from the public that the Commission's current procedures for handling complaints are not adequate to ensure the integrity of the Commission's process. The Commission is currently reviewing the procedures and will report back to the public by the end of the year.

210034

1. The first step in the process of identifying a problem is to determine the nature of the problem. This involves a thorough understanding of the situation and the factors that may be contributing to the problem.

[illegible]

institutes.

## **ECONOMIC ACTIVITY**

Petroleum was discovered in 1959 and has since financed the transformation of Libya from a poor nation at the time of independence to a rich one with vast sums to spend on social, agricultural, and military development. In 1991, Libya ranked 12th among world petroleum producers.

Manufacturing and other private-sector economic activities have been nationalized. The construction, food-processing, textile, petrochemical, and tanning industries, along with the production of traditional handicrafts, are the leading industrial activities. Land suitable for agriculture, located mainly in the coastal regions, comprises less than 6% of the total area. Investments in land reclamation for stabilizing dune areas, irrigation facilities, and improved seed strains have done little to reduce Libya's dependence on imported food. Because of the drop in world oil prices in the 1980s, Libya had to scale back many development plans. In 1991, however, Qaddafi inaugurated the first phase of his most ambitious project, a great artificial river to transport water from aquifers beneath the Libyan desert to coastal cities.

Most traffic moves along a modern highway network that now connects the coastal towns with the desert oases and petroleum fields. Tripoli and Benghazi are the chief ports for general cargo; Es Sidar, Ras Lanuf, and Marsa el Brega handle only petroleum shipments. Petroleum is the only important export.

## **GOVERNMENT**

Qaddafi has tried to transform Libya into an egalitarian, socialist state of the masses. In theory, there is no formal government. According to the 1977 constitution, the masses rule themselves through an interlocking network of people's committees that exercise control over virtually all governmental and nongovernmental activities. The highest of these bodies is the General People's Congress (GPC). Qaddafi, Libya's "Revolutionary Leader," has held no formal office since his resignation as secretary-general of the GPC in 1979. The Koran and Islamic law (the sharia) are the basis for the government.

## **HISTORY**

Phoenicians, Greeks, and Romans all established colonies in the area of present-day Libya. Arab domination began in the 7th century. In 1510, Spain conquered Tripoli and ruled until 1551 when Turkish forces made Libya part of the OTTOMAN EMPIRE. In 1711 the area became virtually autonomous and enjoyed 125 years of prosperity based on piracy directed by the Karamanli family; in 1835, however, Ottoman rule was reasserted.

In 1911, Italy declared war on Turkey (see ITALO-TURKISH WAR) and annexed Libya, making it a colony in 1934. Italian settlement was opposed by the nationalist Sanusi (conservative Sunni Muslims; see SANUSI, AL-), whose leaders subsequently returned from exile to fight alongside the Allies and drive Italian and German forces out of Libya during World War II. After the war, Libya was placed under British and French administration. Italy gave up attempts to regain control in 1947, and the United Nations granted Libya independence effective in 1951 as the United Kingdom of Libya; the Sanusi leader Muhammad Idris of Cyrenaica became King IDRIS I.

In 1969, Idris was deposed, and Qaddafi and the Revolutionary Command Council seized power. Qaddafi, known for his radical Arab nationalism, has been a persistent foe of Israel and has attempted unsuccessfully to merge Libya with Egypt, Syria, Sudan, Tunisia, Chad, Morocco, and Algeria. Qaddafi has been accused of interfering in the internal affairs of a number of African states; he provided arms and military training to various rebel groups, including the one that overthrew the government of Chad in December 1990. Qaddafi's activities also involved him in conflicts with the United States, France, and Great Britain. After the United States launched air attacks on Libyan targets in 1986 in retaliation for Qaddafi's support of international terrorism, government agencies were moved from Tripoli to remote villages. Qaddafi survived coup attempts in 1970, 1975, and 1984. He released many political prisoners and moderated some of his radical economic policies in 1988. But popular discontent again mounted after the UN ordered a ban on arms sales and airline flights to Libya on Apr. 15, 1992. The sanctions were imposed because Qaddafi refused to turn over two Libyan security agents suspected of involvement in the 1988 downing of Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, for trial outside Libya.

Gary L. Fowler

Bibliography: Anderson, L., *The State and Social Transformation in Tunisia and Libya* (1986); Ansell, M. O., and



al-Arif, I. M., *The Libyan Revolution* (1972); Cooley, John K., *Libyan Sandstorm* (1982); Davis, J., *Libyan Politics* (1988); Deeb, M. J., *Libya's Foreign Policy in North Africa* (1988); Deeb, M. K. and M. J., *Libya Since the Revolution* (1982); Fathaly, Omar, et al., *Political Development and Bureaucracy in Libya* (1977); First, Ruth, *Libya: The Elusive Revolution* (1975); Harris, L. C., *Libya* (1986); Khader, B., and El-Wifati, B., eds., *The Economic Development of Libya* (1986); Martin, D., and Walcott, J., *Best Laid Plans* (1988); Pelt, Adrian, *Libyan Independence and the United Nations: A Case of Planned Decolonization* (1970); Segre, Claudio, *Fourth Shore: The Italian Colonization of Libya* (1975); St. John, R. B., *Qaddafi's World Design* (1987); Wright, J. L., *Libya, a Modern History* (1982) and *Libya, Chad, and the Central Sahara* (1989).

[illegible]